

## **A Short History of the SHIPS-IN—Bottles Association of America**

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In 1979 I became the North American correspondent for the Ships-In-Bottle Association of France. During the three year period, after taking the job, the French organization became lopsided as the American and Canadian roster grew out of proportion. In addition, the production of a multi-lingual newsletter became a burden on Max Truchi, the French president, who spent a lot of time on the English translation of *Rose des Vents* (Compass Card), his newsletter.

In 1982 I suggested to the San Diego Maritime Museum that they host the First International Ship-In –Bottles Exposition (August 1 to September 30, 1982) at the San Diego Maritime Museum. It was then that we formed the Ships-In-Bottles Association of America. Jack Hinkley came to San Diego for the show from his home near Pittsburgh and we discussed forming our own organization. Our reasoning was that with so many American and Canadian members it would be easier to produce our own newsletter and plan our own events without all the international correspondence ( there was no E-mail then) and bi-lingual translation. Jack agreed to become president and I became the newsletter editor. One of our members in Pennsylvania, a nice guy named Harold Gile, suggested the name **BOTTLE SHIPWRIGHT** for our publication. I was the editor for three years, then relinquished the job to Alex Bellinger, in Massachusetts. Then a few years after that Ray Handwerker, in Florida volunteered for the job. He has been our editor ever since.

We started with 35 members, but that number soon increased as we began getting out publicity about our group. A few years later we listed our organization in the American Encyclopedia of Associations, in the World Almanac and in Model Ship Builder Magazine. These listings were a great help in recruits. The listing in the Encyclopedia of Associations helped reporters and writers find us so that they could write articles about our art. They would contact me and since I also kept the membership roster I was able to find SIB builder near the writer's home to assist in the article writing and to provide material for photographs. These newspaper/magazine articles and one television show about bottled ships entitled *What's My Hobby*, on the Home and Garden channel, also helped with recruiting. A few years ago one of our tech savvy builders in Florida, Brian Frantz, volunteered to create a web page for us. Many additional contacts have come from that.

The Association is now in our 23<sup>rd</sup> year and membership is holding steady at about 175-200 members. Our membership is worldwide and not restricted to builders in North America, so we have members in India, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and scattered across Europe.